The Behavior Analyst 1985, 8, 39–51 No. 1 (Spring)

Adlerian Psychology as an Intuitive Operant System

Ann B. Pratt
Capital University

Traditional accounts of the Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler tend to sentimentalize his system and obscure its functional flavor. Six basic Adlerian positions on human behavior, including Rudolf Dreikurs' "four goals of misbehavior," are interpreted as a primitive statement of operant principles. Applied techniques long used by Individual Psychology practitioners strongly resemble interventions that applied behavior analysts have developed by more systematic means.

Alfred Adler (1870–1937) and his students—notably the late Rudolf Dreikurs (1897–1972)—are presumed to have been wedded to a "teleological" psychology that is antithetical to behavior analysis. The presumption conceals what is really a profound affinity. Adlerians arrived at a crude functional view of behavior. The purpose of this article is to justify this way of looking at Adler's Individual Psychology (IP).

IP gained a foothold in America during the 1930s and 1940s, after Adler and then Dreikurs settled here. Dreikurs came in 1937 (the year of his mentor's death), and during a prolific 35-year clinical and publishing career promulgated Adler's system and his own extensions of it in hospitals, schools, clinics, and parent-education programs. IP was an early "outreach" movement, conducted aside from mainstream psychology, and known, if it was known at all, for its straining against both establishment psychiatry and all versions of behaviorism. The stance of IP practitioners today is similar. Adlerians have not followed modern behaviorism, often wildly misrepresenting it, and have rejected "behavior modification," even though they have hoped (as we will see) for a convincing learning psychology.

In the meantime, most psychologists' impressions of Adler's system are both thin and seriously wrong. They are thin because psychologists finish graduate school without being required to study IP beyond a few paragraphs in a systems course. They are largely wrong because Adler was an unsystematic writer whose work readily became distorted. For an organized, authoritative account of what he said, one must rely mainly on the edited collection and commentary of H. L. and R. R. Ansbacher (1956).[1] Although Dreikurs interpreted the system effectively, he did so in medical-school and field settings. In academic circles, IP has remained relatively obscure.

The most unfortunate effect of typical distortions of IP has been to sentimentalize it. Adler's conception of purpose, for instance, is routinely interpreted in texts in a way that invites the reader to visualize people creatively pursuing lofty life goals all over the place (Hall & Lindzey, 1970, pp. 121–128). A better notion of what he meant by purpose is given by any of the wry remarks he made as a clinician—for example, "If a child is messy, we may be sure someone cleans up for him" (R. Ansbacher, 1975, p. 108).

Before advancing the present argument, then, I offer a brief background sketch of IP, in characteristic Adlerian language. The sketch should furnish a less

This article is a revised version of a paper read at the meeting of the Association for Behavior Analysis, May 28, 1983, in Milwaukee. Requests for reprints may be sent to Ann B. Pratt, 114 Learning Center, Capital University, Columbus, OH 43209.

[1] References to this volume will cite Adler when the passage is from Adler's works, and Ansbacher and Ansbacher when the passage is from those editors' Comment sections. References to Adler should also show the year of original publication, but do not. My ignorance of German made it impossible for me to be sure, from the grouped citations in the Ansbachers' book, of the original publication date in each case. The references to Adler in this article are to titles he published between 1912 and 1935.

slushy reading than is common elsewhere.

A SKETCH OF INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

From birth, behavior is socially embedded. No one functions autonomously. Seeking to belong and to have a place or role in human groups is universal; this seeking is called the "social interest." Most interpreters of Adler have read him as saying that the social interest is innate, but whether or not he intended to say that, he held that appropriate social interest must be *developed.* If constructive or useful behavior does not earn some appreciation from the family group and groups later encountered, children do not mind adopting useless behavior. Better to take the role of the neighborhood terror than to be a "nothing," to enjoy no delineated social role.

The behavior that gets established, then, is the behavior that works to keep others involved—the behavior that gets reinforced in the here-and-now. Since Dreikurs used the term "reinforce" and "reinforcement" in the way behaviorists do, such talk is not alien to IP (see Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1971, p. 86).

Always, the child is responding to, and acting on, the environment, both the *inner* environment—genetic endowment and organismic stuffings and events—and the *outer* environment—natural and social (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, p. 16ff.). Note that Adlerians formulated "environment" as radical behaviorists do (e.g., Bijou, 1976, p. 6). "Environment" is the stimulation that impinges on the person from within and without. IP never divided the person into inner and outer being.

Children cannot fathom the subtleties of the social environment, so they usually interpret their experiences *wrongly,* adopting "fictional goals." A fictional goal is an unconscious belief, acquired by trial and error, that doing X leads to Y—for instance, screeching usually brings Mom rushing to the scene. The goal is fictional because screeching is not the only way to obtain social interaction, but it *is* logical in the sense that the acquired strategy has gotten results. In the Ansbachers' words, the goal is "both fictional and expedient" (1956, pp. 82, 83). One can almost hear Skinner saying, "The organism is always right," a maxim that refers to expediency, but subtly suggests possible distortion.

Closely tied to fictional goals is the concept of the "private logic," the aggregate of all the person's subjective, unconscious interpretations of his or her experience (Adler, 1956,[2] pp. 130, 413–414; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, p. 35, 297). It is called a logic for the reasons mentioned. It is private because it is unarticulated, unshared, and untested.

Adlerians like to illustrate private logic by case examples. Consider a brother-sister pair. Herbert, 11, is shy, speaks softly, has few friends, sticks to the house except for attending school or going to the store for his parents. At home, he busies himself cleaning his room, straightening the basement, doing homework, and helping his mother. Melanie, 9, is outgoing, popular, and a laggard. Her folks must plead with her or force her to take care of her room or do chores; she must constantly be reminded, coaxed, and helped. It is not unusual for her to come into her room and find that Herbert has already made her bed and put away whatever she has left lying about. Melanie enjoys the service, but complains that Herbert is a "ninny" (Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 14–15).

Using certain rules not described here, Adlerian practitioners are trained to "guess" about a client's private logic. The practitioner might guess that Herbert's logic tells him (among other things) that to be important in the family he must always be the super-helpful one. His sister's logic, perhaps, tells her that she has status around the house as long as others are in her service. Neither child is expected to be able to describe such fictions. They are unconscious, although not "deeply buried" (Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 4–5).

Around the fictional goals and private

---

[2] See note 1.

logic, a *life style* (personality) is woven as the experiential history keeps unfolding. The life style resists change until and unless other people stop "cooperating" with it by reinforcing what the person is doing. Even then, the basic contours of the life style persist (Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 263–264).

Omitted from this sketch are certain important components of Adler's fictionalism—for instance, "upward striving," and the *useful* role of some fictions in social melioration. Omitted also is most of the social psychology of IP—in many ways the heart of the system. Still, the background should have conveyed some of the flavor of how Adlerians perceive people, especially children.

WHY IP APPEARS TO BE AN INTUITIVE OPERANT SYSTEM

Most psychologists realize that both Adler's system and behaviorism draw our eye to the *consequences* of behavior, and that Adler, like Skinner, held that the *individual's* doings are lawful (Adler, 1956, p. 195). O'Connell identified these and other points of accord, such as the rejection of conceptions of autonomous man (1975, pp. 140–153). My contention is that these few common notes are merely the obvious ones, and that the resemblance between IP and radical behaviorism is comprehensive.

To defend this point, I present six classic Adlerian positions—not all of them fully known or understood outside the IP camp—which show how clinicians of this tradition anticipated operant findings. Following that, I will illustrate some striking similarities between the techniques of Adlerian practitioners and those of applied behavior analysts.

Six IP Positions Consonant With Operant Psychology

The six themes will be stated in a mix of common-sense language and the concrete Adlerian clinical jargon; high-level IP abstractions are set aside (e.g., "Every personality is a self-consistent unity"). The abstract language that Adlerians use—peppered with slogan-like expressions that put their differences with Freud and with behaviorism in the foreground—often conceals the shrewdness of their intuitions. Sometimes the themes will refer to "movements," sometimes to behavior (Adlerian literature is full of both terms). "Movement" is the IP word for behavior-plus-all-its-meanings to the behavior.

1. *Internal motivators and traits only appear to explain the person's present movements; a history of natural and social consequences has been at work. Movement is goal-directed. Further, the person's "relationships" with different others are sharply different; trait psychology too readily misses the significance of people adopting different movements in different social surroundings.* (See Adler, 1931, 1956, chap. 3; Dreikurs, 1967, pp. 21, 59–61; Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 4, 5, 80, 189; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, pp. 32–34, chaps. 2, 3, 4, 21).

Most psychologists know that Adler, and Dreikurs after him, rejected trait psychology. Less well known is the strong accent Adlerians have placed on how one person's behavior patterns shift dramatically (or subtly) as social circumstances shift. Among psychologists of the older traditions, they seem to be first to see behavior as embedded in situations.

A typical exchange is one I observed between an Adlerian practitioner and the parents of 6-year-old Marcia. Father described Marcia as a constant teaser; Mother insisted she was nothing of the kind. The clinician pursued the matter until it became clear that the disagreement centered on bedtime; that Marcia teased hard for extra stories whenever her father put her to bed (Dad would wearily read on), but did not do so when Mother put her to bed (Mother would say, "We'll have another story tomorrow—Good night, dear"). The parents chuckled and conceded that their disagreement now seemed less mysterious.

Adlerians call exchanges like this one "teleo-analysis." Such analyses are often conducted in group demonstrations, during which clients who have consented to discuss a problem proceed to explore it

with an interested audience present, under ground rules that assure mutual respect. Participants guess "why" so-and-so did or does such-and-such, and the clinician leading the session attempts to sharpen everyone's wits. In a 1959 demonstration, Dreikurs talked with a teenager, Tom, who had been expelled from school after a history of a "bad" relationship with the principal and brushes with the law. Tom related the precipitating incident as follows:

> Well, I was standing out at the lunch courts one day, and the principal comes walking along. And I was standing out with these girls. And he says—(he thought I had *second* lunch, and I had *first* lunch)—he says, "What are you doing out of class?" And I says, "Well, I'm just talking to these girls, you know." And he says, "You're going to be the next one kicked out of school if you don't . . . straighten up." And I was mad, you know, because he embarrassed me in front of the girls. So I said, "Before I do, I'm going to smash you right in the mouth." And he says, "That's it, you're out." So I did [smash him]. (Dreikurs, 1967, p. 58)

When the audience and Tom himself were asked to discuss "why" he had punched the principal, they offered reasons centering on current feelings, trait-like feelings, and personality. For instance, Tom said he had felt embarrassed and angry, and that he had always hated the principal anyway. Others suggested that Tom had probably felt unjustly accused, was hostile to authority, or had a delinquent personality structure. Dreikurs rejected all of these explanations as "too general"—pointing out, for example, that hostility toward the principal tells nothing about why Tom punched the man on *this* occasion. At length, after Dreikurs persisted in asking about the presence of girls, and in reminding everyone that the girls' reaction to the aggression had been admiration, Tom grinned and allowed that he had probably been trying to show off. Throughout, Dreikurs' analysis stresses "all the cues" present just before the aggression, and the apparent social pay-off for it: peer admiration for "guts" (1967, pp. 59–61).

A behaviorist might interpret Marcia's teasing and Tom's aggression similarly. In short, "teleoanalysis" looks to me like a prescientific version of Skinner's three-term contingency. The apparently naive purposivism of IP, that is, the claim that behavior is "goal-directed," is reconsidered under theme 5.

2. *Human beings are typically engaged in unconscious two-way management of one another* (Adler, 1931, pp. 33, 44; 1956, pp. 93, 232–234, 242; Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 3, 4–5, 13, 35, 44).

From clinical hunch, Adler and his students discerned the significance of the reciprocal behaviors that Skinner later treated functionally when he spelled out how we control *each other's* doings. We will return to this point under theme 4.

In the meantime, Adler and Dreikurs' over-all conception of the unconscious is worth noting for two reasons. First, they held that a person's actions can be marvelously artful in provoking familiar responses from others, without the actor having any idea that he or she is working for that result. Thus, their work foreshadowed radical behaviorists' findings that the effects of reinforcement do not require the behaver's awareness. Second, general texts often misrepresent Adler as denying importance to unconscious functioning (e.g., Schultz, 1981, p. 353). Adler did reject Freud's notion of repression and the idea that we walk about harboring huge reservoirs of unreachable impulses, but he adhered to the proposition that in most cases we do *not* know why we do what we do. "The unconscious," he wrote in 1913, "is . . . that which we have been unable to formulate in clear concepts" (1956, pp. 232–233). We do not *notice* the link between how we move and how others cooperate, or the link between, for example, finding a new acquaintance attractive and our disappointment in a spouse (p. 232). Such an account of unawareness is strikingly like Skinner's assertion that all behavior is unconscious until we are induced to respond to it and to the contingencies under which it was shaped (1974, pp. 153, 171).

3. *Constructive behavior and useless behavior are acquired according to the same principles. Eventually, learning psychology may clarify these principles in detail* (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963, pp.

3, 20, 23; Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 2–3, 10–20, 187 ff.; Watson, 1978, pp. 529–531).

Adler's school of psychology has shown vigorous skepticism about theories that pose discontinuities between "normal" and "abnormal" behavior, making gentle fun of these terms. Further, Adler held that the person's movements and personality were somehow traceable mainly to the experiential history; in other words, the life style is largely learned (Watson, 1978, p. 529ff.). While Adler himself referred often to experience and seldom to learning, Dreikurs later used certain (unsophisticated) learning language (e.g., "trial and error"). He and his colleagues declared that as learning psychologies matured, they would eventually show us in detail just how children acquire cognitions, skills, goals, and life styles (Dreikurs et al., 1971, p. 2).

If you converse with just any Adlerian, you may infer that adherents to this school see their psychology as "explaining" what people do. The larger intellects in the IP tradition are more discerning; they see that their system is not a functional report of behavior. The Ansbachers, for instance, interpret Adler's work as a descriptive system, "a psychology of understanding, not of explanation" (1956, pp. 13, 14, 18). *That* the child constructs a private logic, for example, does not tell us *how* the child constructs it.

4. *Socializers in our culture over-rely on punishment and threat, and allow useless behavior to become worse by unwittingly "falling into the traps" that children unconsciously set. To change problem behavior we must first change our practices, not our "attitudes." Changing the former helps us change the latter* (see Dreikurs, 1947, 1948; Dreikurs & Grey, 1968, p. 44; Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. xi, 8, 16, 18, 80 ff., 196, 244–245; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, pp. 5, 6, chap. 11).

Appeals to abandon punitive measures and use positive ones have permeated the Adlerian manuals. "Falling into the trap" is their way of expressing how adults and agemates cooperate with useless behavior and make it more frequent, although they "intend" no such thing. IP writers also have snorted at the popular notion that socializers' attitudes, or perhaps "deficiencies of love," are the root of behavior problems. They have held that we must change what we *do* with children, and that faithful adherence to the changed practices *over the necessary time* will help us "feel better" about the kids (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963, p. 5).

By the 1940s or before, Dreikurs had formulated his chief extension of Adlerian theory, the "four goals of misbehavior" (1947). It is an intuitive outline of *worsening* behavior, worth looking at closely. The lefthand entries of Table 1 present the four goals, and some behaviors typically associated with them. Note that behavior directed at any goal, except the last, may be "active" or "passive" in style. Dreikursians see these behaviors as maintained by the social consequences that often follow them, not shown in Table 1. For instance, adults typically respond to clowning by rebuking the child; they respond to appeals for unusual help or privilege by giving the help or "feeling sorry." They keep disputes and power struggles alive by opposing defiance, or by yielding to stubbornness. When a child adopts hurtful or vicious tactics, they act shocked and escalate punishment. When a child daydreams or withdraws or remains unresponsive over long periods, adults eventually say things like "I've tried everything with you—I give up."

The *common* movements of Table 1, *commonly* encouraged or maintained by the characteristic behaviors of others just described, should not obscure Dreikurs' frequent caution that movements looking alike may be directed at different goals. For example, crying may be a bid for attention, or it may be a "use of temper" in a power struggle. Radical behaviorists say it differently: topographically similar behaviors may be maintained by different reinforcers. The point is the same.

According to Dreikurs, the "serious" misbehaviors shown in the table are unwittingly fashioned *gradually* by ineffective child-management practices. If children adopt useless behavior at all, they begin with the attention-getting mechanisms (AGMs). If and when AGMs give

TABLE 1

Dreikurs' "Goals of Misbehavior" seen as attention-reinforced behavior and countercontrol measures

Dreikurs' four goals[a]	Operant parallel
Undue attention	
"Active" style: clowning, peskiness, bossing others, cutting up.	Classes of problem behavior acquired and maintained by others' attention.
"Passive" style: asking unusual help or special service.	
Power	Countercontrol (CC) Measures[b]
"Active" style: Defiance, breaking rules, fighting.	CC such as resistance or defiance that may weaken others' power.
"Passive" style: Stubbornness, pouting, "using temper."	CC by stubbornness or emotional protest (BFS, 1974, 190).
Revenge	
"Active" style: vicious damage or aggression, ploys that "hurt feelings."	CC by attack, such as vandalism (BFS, 1968, 98; 1974, 190).
"Passive" style: "violent passivity," such as insolent silence.	CC by "pure inaction, the object of which is to enrage" (BFS, 1968, 98–99).
Being left alone (assumed disability)	
Daydreaming, withdrawing, refusing tasks, and (in teen years) dropping out of school.	CC by moving out of range—either by spatial escape or by minimizing aversive stimuli (BFS, 1971, 62–63; RN, 35).

Note. Sources omit year of publication unless needed for identification; numbers following sources are page numbers.

[a] Described in Dreikurs, 1948; Dreikurs, Grunwald, and Pepper, 1971, pp. 17 ff.; and Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964, chap. 4.

[b] Described in Skinner [shown in table as BFS], 1968, pp. 97–99; 1971, pp. 169–170; 1974, pp. 190–196; and Nye [shown as RN], 1979, pp. 35, 45, 84–85.

way to "worse" patterns of movement, the process proceeds from top to bottom. Cara's clowning or hijinks might first amuse adults, but later be opposed or punished (without any attempts by socializers to recognize constructive social coping when such coping occurs). The youngster may then adopt defiant behavior (the "goal" now is to lure the grown-ups into tests of will). When adults then take stronger and stronger measures to display their own superior power, Cara may eventually turn to revengeful tactics (the goal now is to hit back, to see others' feelings crushed). That the child remains unaware of her purposes in no way prevents her behavior from being superbly effective in goading adults into these increasingly vigorous attempts to control her.

Other children may follow a passive progression—from dependent appeals for help, to stubbornness or pouting when the appeals cease to win special attention, to "violently passive" tactics. The very last resort of such children (assuming socializers' practices continue to be futile) is to slip into withdrawal, seeking to be left alone.

In other words, the child whose behavior slowly deteriorates will "stay with" the active or the passive style of goal-seeking. Within the passive mode, Dreikurs said that another sort of progression is common: a direct shift from AGMs to a display of deficiencies or disabilities. In any case, Dreikursians see such children—those working to be left alone—as the "most deeply discouraged" of all misbehaving youngsters, in the sense that improved adult strategies, if applied, will take the longest time to bear fruit. As such children have pursued their useless doings, their skills have suffered more and

more. The deficiencies are real, but are also "assumed," in the sense that assuming them has paid off time after time in the short run.

Dreikurs observed that these children can outlast almost any adult. Consider a shift from AGM to assumed disability. Ken, who perhaps first relied on his teacher to do everything for him and later found her preaching that he must try things himself, now sits and gazes out the window. He does nothing and says nothing when upbraided or pleaded with. He keeps himself "out of the situation" by sheer sensory exit, until at last his teacher "falls into the trap" and *leaves him alone.*

Dreikurs' four goals have always struck me as convincing, somehow. From the time I came across them in the early 1960's, I wondered what a functional account of them might look like. During the 1960's and early 1970's, behavioral manuals were brimming with experiments and case histories that demonstrated how maladaptive behavior is commonly maintained by socializer *attention,* but in those days, a learning analysis for other "goals" seemed absent or dim. Sometimes behavioral program designers would report child behavior that they had not anticipated, and that was apparently reinforced by consequences quite other than attention—behavior such as extorting tokens, counterfeiting tokens, or otherwise "beating the system" (Litow & Pumroy, 1975, p. 344; Vernon, 1972, pp. 65–66). I thought at the time that behavioral programmers could use a good psychology of "power." Then it occurred to me that certain of Skinner's elaborations of his psychology of countercontrol (1968, 1971, 1974) gave a functional statement of the common human doings that Dreikurs had grouped under power, revenge, and being left alone.

Behaviors that Skinner sees as the middle terms in countercontrol contingencies are shown at the right of Table 1. Because his discussion distinguishes resistance from emotional protest, and attack from inaction, by pointing to the differing contingencies that shape and maintain these behaviors, Dreikurs' two-way classifications for power and for revenge appear sensible (also see Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1977, pp. 152–153, 141, 142). "Working to be left alone" fits an escape-avoidance repertoire. Adlerian passages about the elementary school child who makes a convincing show of being hopelessly unresponsive seem especially insightful, for they focus on the same type of escape that Skinner calls "minimizing aversive stimuli," the form of escape most available to a child legally bound to remain in school. In a nontechnical sense, Dreikurs and his colleagues themselves interpreted display of disabilities as a means of "escaping participation" (Dreikurs & Grey, 1968, p. 28; Dreikurs et al., 1971, p. 207). Dreikurs' view that this pattern of movements is the *hardest to ameliorate* suggests to me that he also roughly glimpsed the significance of what happens when avoidance supplants escape—the maladaptive repertoire becomes unusually resistant to change (Blackham & Silberman, 1975, pp. 56–57).

Finally, the *order* in which Skinner says increasingly alarming classes of behavior are commonly shaped is much like the sequence Dreikurs described (from top to bottom in Table 1). In sum, Dreikurs' four goals were on target.

5. *Most psychologies are mistaken because they drastically overrate "causes" of behavior.*

Adler and his followers rejected many a reified cause, seeing *thinking* as part of movements, not a cause of them (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 87) and *emotions* in a similar light (Adler, 1956, pp. 226, 227; Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963, p. 16; Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 188–189). Dreikurs refused to accept *abilities and disabilities,* and assorted physiological, medical, or psychological *conditions* as explainers of good or poor achievement (Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 11, 216–218, 220; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, pp. 17–18).

In holding that "heredity and environment" are also spurious causes, those of Adler's school seem indisputably hostile to the radical behaviorist's position that psychological events may be assumed to be lawful until that assumption fails. Cer-

tainly IP representatives have constantly berated behaviorists for an allegedly facile determinism (e.g., Dreikurs, 1967, pp. 85–86). I dodge the philosophical wrangle here in favor of pointing to the reason Adlerians give for their stance—the popularization of traditional psychology usually has led to overrating the undeniable role of genetic and environmental components to the point where the child is represented as a *victim* of the past (Adler, 1956, pp. 206–208; Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 5–6). On a commonsense level at least, their warnings are the same as Vargas's admonitions to teachers that "genetic endowment is *overworked* [italics added] as a cause for behavior" (1977, p. 23) and that, although home environment is indisputably important, we "cannot blame note-passing day after day . . . on Ms. Smither's Uncle George's drinking habits at home" (p. 24).

The reader may grant that IP, like radical behaviorism, rests significantly on a rejection of reified causes, but still presume that Adler and his associates reified *purpose.* Does not the IP school assign the naive causal arrow in this particular case? I think that the answer is yes and no—"yes," because in abstract passages Adlerians often say or seem to say that purpose explains behavior (Adler, 1956, chap. 3; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, p. 35), and "no," because as they *work,* they do not land in such traps.

To illustrate, I return to the transcript of the 1959 discussion (Dreikurs, 1967) of which Tom's case was only a part. Elsewhere in this extended session, Dreikurs rejected needs, drives, and insecurity as explainers of problem behavior (pp. 127–129), just as he had rejected hostility and feelings while guessing about Tom's aggression—calling all such motivators "big terms [that are] used only when [we] don't know what goes on" (p. 128). The audience taxed him: Wasn't he himself using "purpose" in this objectionable manner? Dreikurs replied that purpose, if so applied, *would* be suspect; that teleo-analysis never perceives purpose as a big cause; that it is "not to be used as a generality, but as something concrete—purpose in the here-and-now, right now" (p. 129). He explained that watching concrete events can help the analyst discern, for example, whether a boy's joining a photography club serves as a movement toward social participation or as a way of avoiding girls (p. 129).

A thread from the history of IP supports my point. Adler first used purpose as a heuristic—people acted "as if" they were trying to bring on this or that consequence. About 1927, he promoted his heuristic to truth-like status, saying that he had experienced a growing conviction "that this heuristic method represents more than [a] . . . method . . . and that . . . goal-striving . . . is . . . also a basic fact" (1956, p. 90). Later, the Ansbachers renewed the idea that the significance of purpose in IP is its use as a heuristic (Watson, 1978, p. 608). Recently I asked H. L. Asnbacher if he regarded reified purpose as an improper reading of IP. "Absolutely," he said. "If we ever use purpose as a cause, we are guilty of the error we accuse other psychologists of committing!" (personal communication, August 1, 1983). He went on to say that he tries to persuade clinicians to respect the "only-one-noun" rule of his own teacher, R. S. Woodworth, who asserted in the 1920's that psychology's nouns must be changed to verbs, and that only permissible nouns are nouns referring to the organism (see H. Ansbacher, 1982).

To the extent that Adlerians have resisted appealing to purpose as an explanatory fiction, then, the purposivism of their system does not contradict naturalistic accounts of purpose, such as those of Day (1975, pp. 105–127) and Skinner (1953, pp. 87–90; 1974, pp. 55–56, 224, 248).

6. *Our biggest problem in helping others and ourselves is discouragement. For one thing, we are overambitious* (Adler, 1956, pp. 244, 294; Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 66–67). *For another, we fail to see that well-established styles of coping resist change, and we tend to give up too soon—before our efforts for change can bear fruit* (Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. vii, 67–68, 74–75, 203–206, 328; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, pp. 55–56).

Without detailing Adler's theory of how

overambitious striving arises, it can be pointed out that IP practitioners' advice to socializers is to put a vigorous check on perfectionistic expectations. For instance, teachers are to work for bit-by-bit, hour-by-hour gains by children, disciplining themselves to show frequent recognition for such gains (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963, pp. 69, 90–91; Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 58–59, 66, 92). IP warnings that teachers who expect to accomplish wonders with children are in for disappointment are much like behavioral psychologists' warnings against perfectionism (e.g., Vargas, 1977, pp. 128–129, 134).

Long before the science of behavior showed us that intermittent reinforcement, the lasting effects of avoidance learning, and other principles clarify why established behavior resists re-shaping, Adler held that life styles do not change much. Clinicians of nearly every school, of course, have regretted that therapeutic improvements can be long and difficult. But, other than behavior analysts, Adlerians seem to me to be among the few who ever discerned the nub of the matter. Like behaviorists and unlike most psychoanalytic writers, Adlerians have located the sources of resistance in people's *social histories.* Like behaviorists and unlike many members of humanistic schools who sometimes appear oversanguine about change, they have incorporated strategies for persistence *into their training of practitioners.* Adlerians use a collection of concrete practices which I have not described, but which they label "encouragement." They work directly on what the socializer must do to *endure* for long periods in following these nontraditional practices (Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 67, 203–204, chap. 3; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, pp. 255–256). Further, they have always held that someone else must use the same methods to encourage the encourager (Dinkmeyer & Dreikurs, 1963, p. 84; Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. vii, 324–325, 328; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, pp. 55–56). Somehow they perceived what behavioral workers have established from empirical field studies—that much of the labor of successful change consists of finding ways to "reinforce the reinforcer" (e.g., Cossairt, Hall, & Hopkins, 1973; Page, Iwata, & Reid, 1982).

A crude operant approach to discouragement is also perceptible in the way Adlerians look at "good" children (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, pp. 31–32, 46–47). Dreikurs and his colleagues repeatedly warned socializers that certain "model" kids might "switch to the useless side" (Dreikurs et al., 1971, p. 20)—that is, stop producing or even misbehave (cf. Vargas, 1977, p. 134). IP workers see youngsters who must be "first" or "best" as particularly vulnerable to loss of courage when encountering disappointments or when shoved from center stage (Dreikurs et al., 1971, pp. 20, 205; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, p. 261). Since this account goes a long way toward locating the source of the "switches" in the person's history (overcompetitive striving long unwisely rewarded by others) and in the current situation (special recognitions drying up), it meshes well with Skinner's functional analysis of discouragement as a drop in operant output when generous reinforcement schedules are followed by sharply stretched schedules (1974, p. 58; Nye, 1979, p. 42).

Affinities Between IP and Behavioral Practice

The IP techniques most psychologists have heard of consist of one-to-one therapeutic methods such as establishing a client's early recollections, conducting "life-style analyses," and so on (Watson, 1978, p. 530). Less well known are the techniques that are as educational as they are therapeutic and that have been in use for decades in homes and classrooms (Dreikurs, 1948; Dreikurs & Grey, 1968; Dreikurs et al., 1971; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964). If the perceptions that have grown on me for the last dozen years make sense, these methods are primitive versions of a host of intervention procedures developed by applied behavior analysts. Table 2 pairs some IP rules with similar, more systematic behavioral procedures. Right-column entries that are especially familiar are not documented.

TABLE 2

Adlerian and applied-behavior-analytic techniques: similarities

Adlerian rule/technique	Applied BA principle/technique
Rules for allowing natural consequences[a] to work without adult interference (Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper [DGP], 80–90).	Ecological stimuli from the physical environment help build repertoires; adult over-restriction can be questionable (Bijou, 1976, 18–19, 23–24).
Rules for arranging logical consequences for misbehavior and sticking to them (DGP, 80–90).	Maximizing consistency in applying new consequences; exposing children to logical consequences (Meacham & Wiesen [M&W], 66).
Inviting older children to participate in decisions about logical consequences (DGP, 80–81, 87).	Self-imposed contingencies (Lovitt & Curtis; M&W, 68).
Natural and logical consequences preferred over traditional reward and punishment. Build "satisfaction with competence" (DGP, 80–90).	Satiation. Build effectiveness of natural consequences[b] by making them conspicuous (Vargas, 260 ff.).
"Stop making misbehavior worthwhile" (Dreikurs, 1967, 26).	Extinction.
"Encouraging the symptom," e.g., obscene language is dealt with by asking child to tell all the bad words he knows (Dreikurs, 1972, 132; DGP, 266).	Negative practice.
Build school performance bit by bit (DGP, 59, 66, 92).	Reinforce small steps towards desired behaviors/skills.
"Build on strength" (a complex example is the case history of Jimmy, DGP, 254–264).	Capitalize on existing functional repertoires.
Classroom seating arranged to increase chances of constructive behavior (DGP, 96).	Classroom seating arrangements used as setting events for appropriate behavior (M&W, 68).
Use DOs not DON'Ts when formulating rules (DGP, 75).	State rules in the positive (Madsen & Madsen, 181).
"Don't shoo flies," a rule about how adults can avoid allowing their voices to rise to yells; rules about avoiding excessive talk (Dreikurs & Soltz [D&S], chap. 19).	Costs of unconscious shaping. Costs of adaptation.
"Put them all in the same boat." Adults dodge tales—"the children" made the mess, so "the children" will clean it up (D&S, chap. 30).	"Mutual penalties" are preferred over adult entanglement in which-one-of-you-kids-did-this problems (Blackham & Silberman [B&S], 255).
Group problem-solving skills are built sequentially. Talk centers on minor things first, then stories, then "touchy" issues (DGP, 100–136). Later, self-government skills taught through the Class Council (DGP, 148–172).	Shaping. Fading. Other basic principles, such as extinction of respondents associated with open talk about "embarrassing" things.
Sociometric techniques used to understand how a child sees peers in relation to self (DGP, 95–100).	Sociograms used to make a child's social experience conspicuous to the teacher (Givner & Graubard, 113).
Role-play used extensively, both to report incidents the adult did not observe, and to teach problem-solving (DGP, 136–144).	Positive practice of social skills induced through role-play (B&S, 124; M&W, 89; Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 254, 274).

Note. In both columns, a source mentioned more than once is abbreviated after first mention by the code initials shown in brackets. Year of publication omitted unless needed for identification; numbers following sources are page numbers.

[a] Usage connotes physical, unarranged consequences.

[b] Usage connotes activity-related reinforcers.

Both languages refer to *consequences,* but certain meanings differ. Adlerians speak of both "natural" and "logical" consequences. By "natural consequences," they mean consequences delivered by the natural environment or occurring in the ordinary course of events—consequences no one need arrange. Crawling on gravel scrapes the knees; forgetting one's coat means feeling cold; the sound of a tune reinforces playing an instrument. The concept overlaps somehow with subclasses of stimuli that behaviorists call sensory, ecological, or homeostatic, and with non-contrived, activity-produced reinforcers (Bijou, 1976, pp. 18–25, 178; Vargas, 1977, pp. 130–132). By "logical consequences," IP people mean those *logically related* to the behavior in question, *arranged* by others, and effective only if *consistently applied.* If one defaces library books, one loses library privileges. Meacham and Wiesen's use of "logical consequences" (1974, p. 66) seems similar to the IP use.

In the case of role-play, we note that Adlerians and behavioral practitioners have used the technique for somewhat different purposes. In whole, however, Table 2 shows a close conceptual match of strategies.

To be sure, the two traditions diverge in important ways. Adlerian prescriptions such as "Build on strength" are seriously unsystematic; IP practice relies greatly on the relatively weak tactic of persuading socializers to bring their own behavior under the control of rough-and-ready rules. Unlike behaviorists, Adlerians have developed no thorough means of monitoring the effectiveness of their methods.

ADLERIAN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

To date, IP methods have depended much more than have behavioral interventions on the analysis and use of group life and the peer culture as vehicles for behavior change. The basic principles I have tried to present here give rise to the guts of IP, its social psychology. The last four lefthand entries from Table 2 thinly suggest a few of its applications in group settings. What the sampling cannot convey is the psychology of siblings, the rationale for heavy use of fiction and legends, characteristic group-based strategies for classroom discipline, and the canniness of Dreikurs' rules for role-play, group discussion, the Family Council, and the Class Council (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, pp. 347–348, 403–404; Dreikurs, 1948; Dreikurs et al., 1971, chap. 3; Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964, chap. 39; Grunwald, 1964; Lidrich, 1968; Poffenberger, 1953). It is worth noting that IP people teach socializers to hatch subtle group schemes for helping discouraged kids (e.g., Dreikurs et al., 1971, p. 258 ff.). Adlerians are blatant social interventionists.

A NOTE ON THEORETICAL DIVISIONS

How can my argument be taken seriously, when Adlerians and radical behaviorists have stood at the polar ends of so many issues? There is the teleology-determinism wrangle, the "holistic" stance vs. a preference for analysis, clashes over the problem of meaning, and a phenomenological vs. a functional approach to privacy.

For some time, I have scrutinized these oppositions out of curiosity about why the systems seem both friendly and antagonistic. I find that the famous conceptual gulfs do not survive close study; sometimes they even re-appear as mutually supportive positions. For instance, Skinner's exacting analyses of private events (1953, chap. 17; 1974, pp. 27–30, 31–32, 102–104) yield a plausible sketch of *how* the young and naive human organism might acquire a mistaken "private logic" (Pratt, 1984). On hindsight, Adler thus appears to have been a wise fellow for denying the autonomy of the inner life and highlighting its fictions instead.

Radical behaviorism can encompass a productive purposivism and a productive phenomenology, as Day as shown (1969, 1975). The real gulfs between rad-

ical behaviorism and the Adlerian brand of phenomenology lie somewhere else. I suspect that they hinge on matters of how useful conclusions about psychological events are best generated (see Day, 1969, pp. 320–323), but these questions are beyond the scope of the present discussion.

CONCLUSION

Adlerians have shown a keen eye for the powerful variables that shape behavior—consequences embedded in situations. They avoid common reifications, and sometimes even have the wit to resist reifying their own central concept, purpose. In light of the subsequent work of operant technologists, at least six themes from IP, including Dreikurs' "four goals," seem decidedly on target. Given that these clinicians have worked without any tools for a functional analysis (the tools first unavailable, later ignored), their conclusions and their therapeutic-educational techniques appear remarkably shrewd.

Understandably, behaviorists have had little apparent reason to find Adler interesting. If I am right that he and Dreikurs unwittingly produced a primitive operant system, then they are interesting. Now that behavior analysts want to push their technology into complex streams of social interactions (Harzem & Williams, 1983, p. 572; Parrott, 1983), I should think applied behavior analysts working with children and teenagers would find that IP group interventions suggest some directions for effective analysis and practice. The IP applied social psychology is rich, hard-nosed, and congenial to the behavior-analytic viewpoint. Adlerians have neglected to make an empirical case for their social strategies. I would like to see forward-looking behavior analysts pick them over, refine them, and test them.

REFERENCES

Adler, A. (1931). *The case of Mrs. A: The diagnosis of a life style.* Chicago: Alfred Adler Institute of Chicago.

Adler, A. (1956). *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler* (H. L. Ansbacher & R. R. Ansbacher, Eds., Trans.). New York: Harper & Row.

Ansbacher, H. L. (1982). Robert S. Woodworth, Schafer's action language, and Alfred Adler. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 18,* 112–118.

Ansbacher, R. R. (1975). Behavior therapy made humanistic [Review of *Clinical behavior therapy*]. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 31,* 107–108.

Ansbacher, H. L., & Ansbacher, R. R. (1956). See Adler, A. (1956).

Bijou, S. W. (1976). *Child development: The basic stage of early childhood.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Blackham, G. J., & Silberman, A. (1975). *Modification of child and adolescent behavior* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Cossairt, A., Hall, R. V., & Hopkins, B. L. (1973). The effects of experimenter's instructions, feedback, and praise on teacher praise and student attending behavior. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 6,* 89–100.

Day, W. F. (1969). Radical behaviorism in reconciliation with phenomenology. *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, 12,* 315–328.

Day, W. F. (1975). Contemporary behaviorism and the concept of intention. In W. J. Arnold (Ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation,* Vol. 23 (pp. 65–131). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Dinkmeyer, D., & Dreikurs, R. (1963). *Encouraging children to learn.* New York: Hawthorn Books.

Dreikurs, R. (1947). The four goals of the maladjusted child. *Nervous Child, 6,* 321–328.

Dreikurs, R. (1948). *The challenge of parenthood.* New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce.

Dreikurs, R. (1967). *Adult-child relations.* Chicago: Alfred Adler Institute of Chicago.

Dreikurs, R. (1972). Toward a technology of human relationship. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 28,* 127–136.

Dreikurs, R., & Grey, L. (1968). *A new approach to discipline: Logical consequences.* New York: E. P. Dutton.

Dreikurs, R., Grunwald, B., & Pepper, F. (1971). *Maintaining sanity in the classroom.* New York: Harper & Row.

Dreikurs, R., & Soltz, V. (1964). *Children: The challenge.* New York: Hawthorn Books.

Givner, A., & Graubard, P. S. (1974). *A handbook of behavior modification for the classroom.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Grunwald, B. (1964). Minutes of a school class council. *Oregon Society for Individual Psychology Newsletter, 5* (2).

Hall, C. S., & Lindzey, G. (1970). *Theories of personality* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Harzem, P., & Williams, R. A. (1983). On searching for a science of human behavior. *Psychological Record, 33,* 565–574.

Lidrich, P. (1968). Class council for first grade. *Individual Psychology Newsletter, 18* (9–10, Whole No. 206–207), 77.

Litow, L., & Pumroy, D. K. (1975). A brief review of classroom group-oriented contingencies. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 8,* 341–347.

Lovitt, T. C., & Curtis, K. A. (1969). Academic

response rate as a function of teacher- and self-imposed contingencies. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 2,* 49–54.

Madsen, C. H., Jr., & Madsen, C. K. (1974). *Teaching/discipline* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Meacham, M. L., & Wiesen, A. E. (1974). *Changing classroom behavior* (2nd ed.). New York: Intext Educational Publishers.

Nye, R. D. (1979). *What is B. F. Skinner really saying?* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

O'Connell, W. E. (1975). *Action therapy and Adlerian theory.* Chicago: Alfred Adler Institute of Chicago.

Page, T. J., Iwata, B. A., & Reid, D. H. (1982). Pyramidal training: A large-scale application with instructional staff. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 15,* 335–351.

Parrott, L. J. (1983). Defining social behavior: An exercise in scientific system building. *Psychological Record, 33,* 533–550.

Poffenberger, T. (1953). The Family Council: Kids can confer. *Oregon State College Extension Bulletin* 739. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State College.

Pratt, A. (1984). How is "private logic" acquired? Skinner's psychology of private events. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Schultz, D. (1981). *A history of modern psychology* (3rd ed.). New York: Academic Press.

Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and human behavior.* New York: Macmillan.

Skinner, B. F. (1968). *The technology of teaching.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Skinner, B. F. (1971). *Beyond freedom and dignity.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Skinner, B. F. (1974). *About behaviorism.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Sulzer-Azaroff, B., & Mayer, G. F. (1977). *Applying behavior-analysis procedures with children and youth.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Vargas, J. S. (1977). *Behavioral psychology for teachers.* New York: Harper & Row.

Vernon, W. M. (1972). *Motivating children.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Watson, R. I. (1978). *The great psychologists* (4th ed.). Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott.